

Introduction

Wisconsin needs many tools for economic growth: well-educated workers, vibrant communities with high quality of life, and a business climate offering good jobs.

To support these and other factors, Wisconsin needs a high quality transportation system as the heartbeat of our economy. This report outlines the magnitude of transportation's impact on our economy, describes the role of transportation in meeting current and future needs, and discusses some challenges facing the transportation network.

Transportation supports our economy and freedom

The free flow of people and goods is a major factor in maintaining a high quality of life. The average Wisconsinite travels over 10,700 miles per year by auto alone, not counting trips by airplane, bicycle, public transit, walking, ferry or train. Many of these miles are made by the 3.4 million people who commute to jobs.

Wisconsin's 512,000 farms and businesses produce an annual gross state product of \$166 billion. Their work is made possible by over 455 million tons of freight carried to, from and through the state, with a total value of over \$270 billion. That amounts to almost 890 tons of freight for each business, or 85 tons of freight -- a whole rail carload -- for each person in the state!

Transportation is also a vital component of specific sectors of our economy. Over 3,400 Wisconsin businesses export \$10.5 billion of products that require an interconnected network of truck, train, harbor and airport services to reach foreign destinations. Tourists flock to the state by car, bus, train, plane or boat, spending \$11.4 billion in 2001 on rest and recreation.



A multimodal system serves Wisconsin

Wisconsin maintains an interconnected, multimodal system of transportation infrastructure and services to support these economic activities:

- A 112,000 mile network of state highways and local roads;
- A 3,650 mile freight rail system and two passenger rail routes;
- Fifteen commercial cargo ports;
- Nearly 700 aircraft landing facilities, with nine commercial service airports; and

Public transit or shared-ride taxi service in 68 communities.

Overall, the transportation and logistics industry in Wisconsin employs almost 115,000 people earning almost \$4 billion in wages. This includes truck and bus drivers, railroad workers, airport and airline staff, port employees, and other transportation services providers.

Meeting the needs of a changing economy

Our economy is constantly changing. Industrial firms are increasingly reliant on just-in-time inventory practices that require predictable shipping times and consistent service.

Businesses are looking to transportation for opportunities to achieve cost savings with more efficient service. Employees seek quality jobs with hassle free commutes that allow them to have a high quality of life. Tourism is emerging as a major growth industry.

In the midst of these economic changes, Wisconsin's transportation infrastructure and services need to keep pace and meet existing and future challenges:

- Unchecked highway congestion affects freight transit time and employee commutes;

- Infrastructure needs to be rebuilt to improve reliability of transportation services;
- Airports of all sizes need to handle the demands of corporate and commercial aviation;
- Railroads must handle increased freight traffic while planning for new passenger service;
- Ports need to serve growing freight markets along with new passenger service options.

Wisconsin's economic future depends on a quality transportation system. It is imperative that we make necessary investments in our transportation system throughout the state to ensure our ability to grow our economy, create and retain jobs, and maintain our high quality of life.

